

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEVADA

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NICKOLAS VONALST,

Case No. 3:24-cv-00400-MMD-CLB

Plaintiff,

ORDER

v.

T. ROYAL, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Plaintiff Nickolas Vonalst brings this civil-rights action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 to redress constitutional violations that he claims he suffered while incarcerated at Ely State Prison. (ECF No. 1-1.) On September 20, 2024, this Court ordered Vonalst to file a fully complete application to proceed *in forma pauperis* or pay the full \$405 filing fee on or before November 20, 2024. (ECF No. 5.) The Court warned Vonalst that the action could be dismissed if he failed to file a fully complete application to proceed *in forma pauperis* or pay the full \$405 filing fee for a civil action by that deadline. (*Id.* at 2.)

The Court's order came back as undeliverable to Vonalst's address. (ECF No. 6.) However, Vonalst subsequently filed an updated address. (ECF No. 10.) In light of Vonalst filing an updated address, the Court resent its previous order and extended the deadline for Vonalst to file a complete application to proceed *in forma pauperis* until December 17, 2024. (ECF No. 11.) That extended deadline expired and Vonalst did not file a fully complete application to proceed *in forma pauperis*, pay the full \$405 filing fee, or otherwise respond.

District courts have the inherent power to control their dockets and "[i]n the exercise of that power, they may impose sanctions including, where appropriate . . . dismissal" of a case. *Thompson v. Hous. Auth. of City of Los Angeles*, 782 F.2d 829, 831

(9th Cir. 1986). A court may dismiss an action based on a party's failure to obey a court order or comply with local rules. See *Carey v. King*, 856 F.2d 1439, 1440-41 (9th Cir. 1988) (affirming dismissal for failure to comply with local rule requiring *pro se* plaintiffs to keep court apprised of address); *Malone v. U.S. Postal Service*, 833 F.2d 128, 130 (9th Cir. 1987) (affirming dismissal for failure to comply with court order). In determining whether to dismiss an action on one of these grounds, the Court must consider: (1) the public's interest in expeditious resolution of litigation; (2) the Court's need to manage its docket; (3) the risk of prejudice to the defendants; (4) the public policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits; and (5) the availability of less drastic alternatives. See *In re Phenylpropanolamine Prod. Liab. Litig.*, 460 F.3d 1217, 1226 (9th Cir. 2006) (quoting *Malone*, 833 F.2d at 130).

The first two factors, the public's interest in expeditiously resolving this litigation and the Court's interest in managing its docket, weigh in favor of dismissal of Vonalst's claims. The third factor, risk of prejudice to defendants, also weighs in favor of dismissal because a presumption of injury arises from the occurrence of unreasonable delay in filing a pleading ordered by the court or prosecuting an action. See *Anderson v. Air West*, 542 F.2d 522, 524 (9th Cir. 1976). The fourth factor—the public policy favoring disposition of cases on their merits—is greatly outweighed by the factors favoring dismissal.

The fifth factor requires the Court to consider whether less drastic alternatives can be used to correct the party's failure that brought about the Court's need to consider dismissal. See *Yourish v. Cal. Amplifier*, 191 F.3d 983, 992 (9th Cir. 1999) (explaining that considering less drastic alternatives *before* the party has disobeyed a court order does not satisfy this factor); accord *Pagtalunan v. Galaza*, 291 F.3d 639, 643 & n.4 (9th Cir. 2002) (explaining that “the persuasive force of” earlier Ninth Circuit cases that “implicitly accepted pursuit of less drastic alternatives prior to disobedience of the court's order as satisfying this element[,]” *i.e.*, like the “initial granting of leave to amend coupled with the warning of dismissal for failure to comply[,]” have been “eroded” by *Yourish*). Courts “need not exhaust every sanction short of dismissal before finally dismissing a

1 case, but must explore possible and meaningful alternatives.” *Henderson v. Duncan*, 779
2 F.2d 1421, 1424 (9th Cir. 1986). Because this action cannot realistically proceed until and
3 unless Vonalst either files a fully complete application to proceed *in forma pauperis* or
4 pays the \$405 filing fee for a civil action, the only alternative is to enter another order
5 setting another deadline. But the reality of repeating an ignored order is that it often only
6 delays the inevitable and squanders the Court’s finite resources. The circumstances here
7 do not indicate that this case will be an exception: there is no hint that Vonalst needs
8 additional time or evidence that he did not receive the Court’s second order. Setting
9 another deadline is not a meaningful alternative given these circumstances. So the fifth
10 factor favors dismissal.

11 Having thoroughly considered these dismissal factors, the Court finds that they
12 weigh in favor of dismissal. It is therefore ordered that this action is dismissed without
13 prejudice based on Vonalst’s failure to file a fully complete application to proceed *in forma*
14 *pauperis* or pay the full \$405 filing fee in compliance with this Court’s October 18, 2024,
15 order. The Clerk of Court is directed to enter judgment accordingly and close this case.
16 No other documents may be filed in this now-closed case. If Vonalst wishes to pursue his
17 claims, he must file a complaint in a new case.

18 DATED THIS 30th Day of December 2024.

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21 MIRANDA M. DU
22 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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